



## *X-Plain™*

### *Sacroiliac Injections*

### **Reference Summary**

Some people have pain in the tailbone or the lower back. A sacroiliac joint injection can be effective to help relieve this type of pain. If your doctor recommends a sacroiliac joint injection, the decision whether or not to have the procedure is also yours.

This reference summary will explain the benefits and risks of this procedure.



#### **Sacroiliac Injections**

The tailbone of the spine is joined to the rest of the pelvis at the sacroiliac joint, also known as the 'SI joint.' Unlike other joints, the SI joint does not move. Inflammation of the SI joint can result in severe back pain and possibly pain shooting down the leg.

The aim of the sacroiliac injection is to numb the area and decrease inflammation or swelling. The reduction in swelling may decrease or stop pain.

The medications used will be injected inside the joint.

A needle is used to deliver the medication. Sometimes this is done with the help of an x-ray machine.

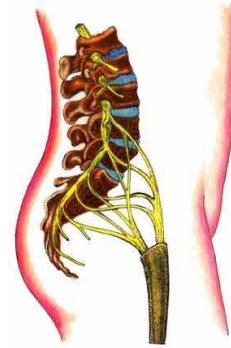
The combination of medications usually consists of two types of medications.

The first is a numbing medication, such as Marcaine®, to stop the pain.

The second is a steroid, such as methylprednisolone, a medication like cortisone, that decreases swelling.

The first medication usually causes the pain to go away for a few hours. There may also be some numbness or weakness in the legs for a few hours after the sacroiliac injection.

In 24 to 48 hours the steroid starts to reduce the swelling. This helps to reduce pain further.



It is normal for the pain to disappear for few hours after the injection.

However, the pain may come back and may last a day or two until the steroid medication begins to work.

It may take an injection every 2 to 3 weeks to achieve long-term relief. If the pain has not improved after 2 to 3 injections, giving more injections will not improve the pain.

Sacroiliac injections may have to be repeated every few months.

#### **Procedure**

Before the injection, the skin is disinfected and numbed with local anesthesia so that you will not feel the pain of the sacroiliac injection. A minute or so later, the medication is injected with a longer needle directly into the SI joint. This is usually

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not painful, although it may be uncomfortable. After injection of the medications, the needle is taken out and the procedure is over. You may experience leg weakness for a few hours after the injection.



### **Risks and Complications**

This procedure is very safe. There are, however, several possible risks and complications. These are unlikely but possible. You need to know about them just in case they happen.

By being informed, you may be able to help your doctor detect complications early. In very rare cases infections may occur. Therefore, it is important to report to your doctor any worsening pain or fever.

You must tell your doctor about all allergies you may have to medications, particularly numbing medications. You must also be sure to inform your doctor if you are or might be pregnant.

It is also important to tell your doctor if you are on any blood thinners such as Coumadin®, Advil®, or aspirin.

This type of medication may have to be stopped for a few days to decrease the risk of internal bleeding.

Rarely patients may have reactions to the medications. The steroid used could increase the blood sugar in diabetic patients, could accelerate the patient's heart rate, or could increase his or her blood pressure. Allergic reactions could very rarely lead to death.

It is therefore very important to inform your doctor about each and every allergy you have, especially drug allergies. Because of the possible discomfort after the injection, you must have somebody with you to drive you home since you will not be able to drive yourself.

X-Rays may be used during this procedure.

The amount of radiation during this test is deemed safe. However, the same amount could be dangerous for unborn children. The drugs used during this procedure may not be safe for an unborn child. It is therefore very important to make sure you are not pregnant prior to this procedure. Be sure to tell your doctor before the procedure is performed if there is any chance you may be pregnant.

### **Summary**

Sacroiliac injections are a very safe procedure that can

significantly help reduce or end lower back pain. However, as you have learned, complications may happen. Knowing about them will help you and your doctor detect them early if they happen.